

# Two indicted in Smyrna child remains case

Attorney General Kathy Jennings announced Tuesday that two people have been charged with multiple felonies over the abuse and eventual death of Emma Cole, a child whose remains were found at a Smyrna softball field.

Brandon Haas, 39, and Kristie Haas, 28, were indicted Monday afternoon on charges including First Degree Child Abuse and Endangering the Welfare of a Child, with the possibility of additional charges.

*"The road ahead is still long, but this indictment is a major step toward justice for Emma," said **Attorney General Jennings**. "No crime is more heinous, more offensive to all we hold dear, than the abuse of a child; and in a community as tight-knit as Smyrna, I know how deeply shocking and disturbing this case has been. Nothing we can do will bring Emma back, but we owe it to her, to her community, and to every child in this state to hold the defendants accountable for their actions. Thanks to the tireless work of law enforcement, our state and federal partners, and the dedicated staff of the Department of Justice, we are one step closer."*

If convicted on all charges, Brandon Haas could face a prison sentence of 45 years. Kristie Haas – who is further charged with Assault 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree, Abusing a Corpse and Reckless Burning – faces a maximum sentence of 55 years.

On September 13, 2019, officers of the Smyrna Police Department responded to a report of a child's remains being discovered at the Smyrna-Clayton Little Lass Softball fields. The discovery sparked a multijurisdictional investigation into

the child's identity and the circumstances surrounding her death.

After more than a year of investigation, the child was identified as Emma Grace Cole, who was three years old at the time of her death. At the time of her death, Emma resided with her mother, Kristie Haas, her stepfather, Brandon Haas, and her siblings in Smyrna, Delaware.

The indictment alleges that Emma was the victim of child abuse before her death. Both Haases are alleged to have deprived Emma of sufficient food and needed medical attention and subjected Emma and her siblings to excessive forced exercise and inappropriate physical discipline.

Brandon and Kristie Haas were arrested in Pennsylvania on October 2, 2020, as part of a joint operation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and multiple state and local law enforcement agencies.

The investigation has been led by the Smyrna Police Department with significant investigative support from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Also assisting the investigation were the United States Secret Service, the Delaware State Police, the Pennsylvania State Police, the Delaware Division of Forensic Science, the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, the Delaware Department of Transportation, the Delaware Office of the State Fire Marshal, the Newton Township (Pa.) Police Department, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

The Delaware Department of Justice continues to review whether additional charges are warranted. The DOJ reminds the press and public that an indictment is a formal accusation and that the defendants are presumed innocent until convicted at a trial, at which the State will bear the burden of proof.